

STARS AND STRIPES

Tuesday, March 25, 2003

A news digest for U.S. forces serving overseas

Sandstorms slow coalition advance

Troops hit Republican Guard outside Baghdad

BY DAVID ESPO

The Associated Press

British troops battled die-hard Iraqi defenders of Basra on Tuesday as warnings mounted of a humanitarian crisis for the city's 1.3 million residents. Blinding sandstorms plagued the American-led advance on Baghdad.

Despite adverse weather in some parts of Iraq, U.S.-led warplanes bombed targets in the northern part of the country. And U.S. troops in control of a vast Iraqi air base sealed 36 bunkers, earmarked as possible sites of Saddam Hussein's elusive weapons of mass destruction.

"We cannot know the duration of this war, yet we know its outcome," President Bush said after receiving an update at the Pentagon. "We will prevail. ... The Iraqi regime will be ended ... and our world will be more secure and peaceful."

Not surprisingly, Saddam Hussein saw it differently. State television carried what it described as a message from him to tribal and clan leaders, saying, "Consider this to be the command of faith and jihad and fight them."

Weather or not, the U.S.-led invasion moved ahead. Elements of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division were about 50 miles from Baghdad and hit Republican Guard units defending the Iraqi capital with an all-night artillery barrage.

Thousands of other troops hastened — as much as the sandstorms would allow — to join them for the coming battle against Saddam's seat of power.

But some helicopters were grounded by the weather, and combat aircraft taking off from the USS Harry Truman returned a few hours later without dropping bombs on their targets.

Distant explosions could be heard in Baghdad, and efforts were underway to dig deeper defensive trenches around the city.

Witnesses said Saddam's intelligence headquarters as well as a sprawling defense complex were hit in overnight bombing.

In the early hours of the invasion, military commanders had hoped that Basra's population would welcome the invading forces.

Instead, resistance by irregular and other forces has kept British troops from securing the city and paving the way for the flow of relief operations.

And in an about-face, a British spokesman told reporters, "We are seizing tactical opportunities as they occur on our terms."

Still, the spokesman, Col. Chris Vernon, described a situation of enormous difficulty. "We are not firing into the center of the city because we cannot risk the



JOHN MOORE/AP

U.S. Army 3rd Infantry Division Sgt. Steven Brussel leans into the wind during a sandstorm at dusk near Karbala, Iraq, on Tuesday. The sandstorm grounded many bombing overflights over Iraq and slowed U.S.-led military progress in the area.

collateral damage to civilians, even though we are being fired on by their artillery," he said.

In addition, Vernon said Iraqi troops are using the local population as human shields, marching them toward the British troops, then firing from behind them before retreating.

About 10 miles from Basra, British forces targeted a Baath party headquarters in Az Zubayr early Tuesday, capturing at least one Baath Party official and killing 20 Iraqi troops from irregular units, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, providing an overview of the military campaign, said.

He said the allies launched air attacks on targets in the northern oil centers of Mosul and Kirkuk, as well as Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, and that troops were making advances in eastern Iraq to help defend two main bridges over the Euphrates.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and others have warned of a possible humanitarian crisis

in the city. The International Red Cross said during the day it had begun repairs at a war-damaged water-pumping station serving the city.

Beyond the need for water and electricity, Christiane Berthiaume of the World Food Program, said government food warehouses are "practically empty."

Bush, after receiving his war update, said U.S. forces were clearing the approaches to Umm Qasr of Iraqi-laid mines.

"Coalition forces are working hard to make sure that when the food and medicine begins to move it does so in a safe way," he said.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who will confer with Bush this week at the presidential retreat at Camp David, was at pains to prepare the British public for difficult days.

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U.S. widens search for rebels in Afghanistan

The Associated Press

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — U.S.-led forces Tuesday broadened a sweep of southeastern Afghanistan for terror suspects and their allies, a day after collecting a large cache of weapons that could have been used by rebel fighters, a U.S. Army spokesman said.

The cache, including more than 170 rocket-propelled grenades and scores of mines and mortar rounds, was the third found since Operation Valiant Strike began in the Sami Ghar mountains of southern Kandahar province last Thursday.

Helicopters on Tuesday ferried troops to an area about 18 miles from where the operation began, Col. Roger King said, without elaborating.

"There was an air assault this morning to reposition forces to the northeast," King told reporters at Bagram air base, headquarters for the multinational coalition fighting in Afghanistan.

Some 600 U.S.-led soldiers are on the ground and hundreds more are providing support in the region as part of the new offensive to hunt for suspected al-Qaida or Taliban fighters and their allies.

Four people have been taken into

U.S. custody, but there have been no clashes with rebel fighters and no soldiers have been injured, King said. There were no new forces taking part in Tuesday's expanded operation.

Regional Afghan official Gul Mohammed Khan said he understood the U.S. forces had moved to the Ataghar district from Maruf, where Taliban spiritual leader Mullah Mohammed Omar has tribal links.

Khan, district chief of Maruf, said the Americans had destroyed a large weapons cache Tuesday morning before leaving.

Separately, just after midnight Monday, a patrol of U.S. forces from the

Shkin base in the eastern Paktika province came under fire by as many as five militants, King said. No soldiers were hurt in the incident.

Tuesday, a solemn ceremony was held at Bagram air base to honor six Air Force rescue team members who died in a helicopter crash while trying to reach two injured Afghan children.

Led by a color guard, teams of six Air Force airmen carried each casket draped in an American flag past two medical helicopters to a transport plane.

The plane left for Landstuhl, Germany, where the bodies were to be transferred on to the United States.

Latest developments

■ About 500 Iraqi fighters have been killed in the last two days by the 3rd Infantry Division's tanks and mechanized units as they swept through southern Iraq, according to a U.S. military official with the infantry division.

■ Sandstorms slowed U.S. and British forces to a crawl and thwarted air missions Tuesday as U.S.-led forces edged closer to the Iraqi capital. Baghdad residents, hunkered down for an eventual battle, woke to howling winds and the distant crash of artillery.

■ As ground troops advanced to within 50 miles of the Iraqi capital, thousands of Marine convoys took dirt roads to avoid cities and towns, creating traffic jams in the push north.

■ U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Victor Renuart, briefing reporters in Qatar, warned Iraqi civilians to stay away from military formations and buildings used by Saddam Hussein's regime and its leaders.

Commenting on Iraqi casualties, including children who had been hospitalized as a result of U.S. attacks, Renuart said: "It is a tragedy to see the children that are injured."

■ Iraqi forces, especially the Fedayeen militia, are "terrorizing neighborhoods" and using civilians as human shields, the U.S. military said.

■ Six satellite jamming devices, which Iraq was using to try to thwart American precision guided weapons, were destroyed and have had "no effect" on U.S. military operations, a U.S. general said.

■ Russia went on a media offensive to repeat denials of American allegations that it is selling anti-tank guided missiles, jamming devices and night-vision goggles to Iraq. It hinted that Washington also had sold sensitive equipment to other nations.

■ British Prime Minister Tony Blair, preparing for a summit in Washington to discuss postwar Iraq, said Tuesday there are bound to be "difficult days ahead" for coalition forces.

■ In an about-face, British forces said Tuesday they have decided to move against militia fighters who have prevented them from securing the southern Iraqi city of Basra. Previously, coalition forces said they wanted to avoid urban combat in Iraq's second-largest city.

■ President Bush will ask Congress for \$74.7 billion to pay for the war with Iraq, assuming a month of combat, and for strengthening counterterrorism efforts at home.

■ Firefighters are trying to put out blazes in southern Iraq's oil fields said that while some wells appear to have been sabotaged, Iraqi troops may have disobeyed orders to blow up many others.

■ U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said "urgent measures" were needed to restore electricity and water supply in Basra, which he said is facing a humanitarian crisis.

From The Associated Press

Sandstorm

Continued from Page 1

"There will be resistance all the way to the end of this campaign," he said.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also made clear he didn't know how long the war would take. "We're still needless to say much closer to the beginning than to the end," he said.

The war is unfolding side by side with diplomatic maneuvering.

Speaking in Toronto, the American ambassador Paul Cellucci said Canada's refusal to send troops to the war effort has upset and disappointed the United States and caused a "bump in relations."

In Saudi Arabia, Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal said his country has contacted the United States and Iraq with a peace proposal, and was awaiting a response.

World

War crimes tribunal: Slobodan Milosevic's war crimes trial was further delayed Tuesday when the former Yugoslav president again failed to appear in court because of health problems.

Milosevic, 61, is defending himself at the trial against 66 counts of war crimes in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s. He has refused legal assistance in court.

At a brief session of the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal Tuesday, presiding judge Richard May said he had been informed Milosevic was refusing to take the full dosage of blood pressure medicine prescribed by tribunal doctors.

May said if Milosevic didn't start taking the medicine as prescribed, the court might appoint him a lawyer against his wishes to ensure the trial can proceed.

Kashmir violence: India's deputy prime minister blamed violence in Kashmir on "our neighbor," but did not accuse Pakistan directly for the massacre of 24 Hindus in a village in the Indian-controlled portion of the Himalayan region.

On Monday, in one of the worst attacks on Hindus in the divided Muslim-majority state claimed by both nations, about eight to 10 armed men dragged villagers out of their homes in the remote village of Nadimarg and shot them at close range, police and witnesses said.

The dead — upper-caste Hindus known as Kashmir Pandits — included 11 women and two children.

Serbian assassination: Police have arrested a man they suspect was the sniper who killed Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, the slain premier's successor said Tuesday.

Prime Minister Zoran Jivkovic identified the suspect as Zvezdan Jovanovic, deputy commander of an elite unit of police troops formed under ex-President Slobodan Milosevic that remains operational and has links to organized crime.

Nigerian stoning: An Islamic court in northern Nigeria on Tuesday delayed the appeal of a woman condemned to death by stoning a year ago, despite the insistence of Nigeria's government that she should be freed.

Amina Lawal, a 31-year-old single mother, was sentenced in March 2002 to be buried up to her neck in sand and then stoned for giving birth to a child out of wedlock.

Appearing at the courthouse with her toddler, Lawal did not betray any emotion about the postponement.

"I've left everything to God. I do not feel anything right now. I know God's judgment is the best and will prevail," she said.

North Korea's nuclear threat: North Korea on Tuesday claimed the United States may attack the communist state, sparking a "second Iraqi crisis."

"No one can vouch that the U.S. will not spark the second Iraqi crisis on the Korean Peninsula," North Korea's state-run Minju Joson newspaper said.

Pyeongyang said Monday that Washington is using the war against Iraq as a test for military action against the North.

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun on Monday dismissed the allegation as "inaccurate and groundless." He said U.S. officials have repeatedly pledged to resolve the issue peacefully.

Chechnya constitution: Russian officials declared Monday that the approval of a new constitution by Chechnya's voters had completely discredited the separatist cause, further dimming

News tracker: What's new with old news

hopes that the Kremlin would negotiate to end the 3½-year-old war.

The constitution, which confirms Chechnya's status as part of Russia, was approved overwhelmingly in Sunday's referendum.

With ballots counted from 292 of 418 electoral districts, 96.1 percent of votes were in favor, Russia's Central Election Commission reported on its Web site. Only 2.6 percent voted "no," the commission said.

Palestinian teen killed: A 15-year-old Palestinian throwing stones at Israeli troops in the West Bank was killed by army fire Monday, Palestinian hospital officials said.

Earlier Monday, the military said troops dismantled an illegal Jewish settlement near the West Bank city of Hebron, the first such outpost taken down since Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's new government took office last month.

The Palestinian teen, Ahmed Abahr-eh, was killed in the West Bank town of Jenin, where troops were enforcing a curfew as they searched about 30 homes.

Military

Air Force Academy scandal: U.S. Air Force leaders told senators Tuesday they will replace four top officers at the Air Force Academy, which is embroiled in a sexual assault scandal, a senator said.

The Air Force officials also said two women would be included in the new leadership, said Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y.

Clinton spoke after Air Force Secretary James Roche and others gave a closed-door briefing to senators on the Armed Services Committee to discuss the allegations that female cadets at the academy were ostracized and reprimanded after they reported rapes.

Clinton did not name the ousted officers, but The Denver Post on Tuesday identified them as Brig. Gen. S. Taco Gilbert III, the commandant of cadets and second in charge at the academy; Col. Steve Eddy, vice superintendent; Col. Bob Eskridge, vice commander; and Col. Sue Slavec, training group commander.

Lt. Gen. John R. Dallager will remain as superintendent and the top official at the 4,100-cadet institution until his scheduled retirement in June, the newspaper said.

States

Shuttle program: Despite the Columbia disaster, NASA officials are forging ahead with plans to upgrade the shuttle fleet to keep it flying until at least 2015 and possibly several years longer, a senior space agency official said Monday.

Michael C. Kostelnik, deputy associate administrator for the international space station and space shuttle programs, said NASA is reviewing 60 possible improvements to the three remaining shuttles — including some to address issues raised after the Columbia disintegrated as it was returning to Earth on Feb. 1.

Primary calendar: As more and more states move their presidential primaries earlier in 2004, the Democratic Party is bracing for a Tuesday version of the Friday night fights.

States are advancing their calendars — moving their primaries and caucuses into February — to try to exert more influence over who will be the presidential nominee.

Maltreated teen: Prosecutors filed murder charges Monday against a man accused of starving his girl-

friend's 18-year-old son, then sending the dying teen off to Florida to find his estranged father.

Prosecutors say Paul Hoffman knew Chester Miller had the mental capacity of a child and couldn't care for himself when he put him on a two-day bus ride.

Prosecutors charged Hoffman with third-degree murder.

Columbia data recorder: An early look at the magnetic tape from the space shuttle Columbia's salvaged data recorder offered hope that it was in good enough shape to yield some information about the doomed flight, NASA said Monday.

Discovered in east Texas on Wednesday, the recorder and its 9,400 feet of tape is stretched and broken in one spot but otherwise in good condition, said NASA spokesman James Hartsfield.

"Right now, the potential for there to be data available to us looks promising," he said.

War on terrorism

Philippine airport security: President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, known for her public outbursts, scolded the manager and police of Manila's international airport over lax security during a surprise inspection Tuesday.

Arroyo, who has vowed to do everything to prevent terror attacks, saw vehicles entering a sprawling parking lot without being inspected and noticed people not being frisked.

She hastily called airport manager Edgardo Manda on a cell phone and gave him an initial dressing down without earshot of bodyguards and journalists.

Al-Qaida suspects in Kenya: Kenya will hand over a suspected senior member of the al-Qaida terrorist network to U.S. authorities, the foreign minister said Tuesday.

Kalonzo Musyoka told parliament that the suspect — whom he did not identify further — was detained in neighboring Somalia last week. He did not say when the suspect would be handed over.

On March 18, Somali gunmen entered a hospital in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, and seized the man Kenyans have identified as a ranking al-Qaida suspect.

Terror trial goes on: The Detroit trial of four men accused of conspiring to support terrorism will continue despite the war with Iraq, a federal judge ruled Monday.

Last week, defense lawyers filed a motion asking U.S. District Judge Gerald Rosen to adjourn the trial, saying that a fair trial would be impossible amid the war.

Karim Koubriti, 24; Ahmed Hannan, 34; Farouk Ali-Haimoud, 22; and Abdel-Ilah Elmardoudi, 37; are charged with conspiracy to provide material support or resources to terrorists.

Business

Market takes dive: The Dow Jones Industrial Average rang up its worst loss of the year both in percentage moves and raw points with a 307-point shel-lacking Monday as hopes faded for a short war in Iraq.

Amid reports of rising casualties and an appearance by Saddam Hussein on Iraqi television, stocks sold off sharply as money flowed into bonds, oil and gold.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 307 points, or 3.6 percent, to 8214, wiping out a 235-point rally on Friday.

It was the worst point drop in the index of 30 industrials since Sept. 4, 2002, when the Dow lost 355 points.

From wire services

Updates from around the war

Landstuhl treats hurt from 101st

LANDSTUHL, Germany — Three 101st Airborne Division members injured when a fellow soldier threw grenades in their Kuwait tent complex were being treated Tuesday at the Army hospital in Landstuhl, a division spokesman said.

The three soldiers, two of whom were in intensive care, arrived at Ramstein Air Base at 1:40 a.m. Tuesday with two Marines who have combat-related injuries, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center spokeswoman Marie Shaw said.

Two additional 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division soldiers with serious grenade injuries were expected to arrive at Landstuhl later Tuesday, division spokesman John Minton said. Another two soldiers injured in the attack may be airlifted to the hospital on Wednesday, Minton said. The division is based at Fort Campbell, Ky.

As of Tuesday, 15 soldiers and Marines injured in fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom were being treated at the Army hospital in Germany, a spokesman said.

Friendly fire hits Patriot

CAMP AS SAYLIYAH, Qatar — In a friendly fire incident, an American F-16 fired on a U.S. Patriot missile battery in Iraq after the battery's radar locked on the jet, U.S. Central Command said Tuesday. No U.S. casualties were reported.

The strike Monday was the war's second involving Patriot batteries apparently failing to distinguish between friendly and hostile targets.

On Sunday, a U.S. Patriot missile battery shot down a Royal Air Force Tornado GR4 near the Kuwaiti border, killing the two crew members.

Monday's incident occurred about 30 miles south of Najaf, said Lt. Mark Kitchens, a U.S. Central Command spokesman. The F-16 fired an AGM-88 high-speed anti-radiation missile at the battery and damaged its radar, he said.

He said the strike was under investigation "to identify procedural changes to ensure the safety of our air crews and Patriot crews in combat operations," he said without elaborating.

Dover gets first bodies

DOVER, Del. — The first remains of U.S. troops killed in the war in Iraq arrived in the United States early Tuesday when the bodies of two Marines were flown into Dover Air Force Base.

A KC-10 tanker plane carrying the bodies landed at 5:41 a.m., said Lt. Olivia Nelson, a base spokeswoman.

She said she did not know where the flight originated.

The base is home to the largest mortuary in the Department of Defense. Besides handling war casualties, the mortuary has identified remains and prepared bodies for burial from both space shuttle accidents and the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon.

Official: 500 Iraqis killed in 2 days

SOUTHERN IRAQ — About 500 Iraqis have been killed in the last two days by U.S. Army infantry tanks and mechanized units as they swept through southern Iraq, a U.S. military official said Tuesday.

The estimate came from Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Preston of V Corps, of the 3rd Infantry Division. Preston said U.S. forces ran into "a lot" of Iraqi tanks and anti-aircraft weaponry and "thousands and thousands" of weapons around the city of Najaf.

"This could have been very ugly, but they're not very motivated," Preston said of the regular Iraqi army recruits. "I think a lot of them wanted to go home."

Many of the Iraqis appeared to have very low morale, he reported, adding that family members were seen pick up dead soldiers and taking them home for burial.

U.S. troops were stopping civilian vehicles and interrogating people, he added.

Asked about his division's plans, he replied: "Baghdad. That's where we're going, one step at a time."

Russia denies selling Iraq equipment

MOSCOW — Russia went on a media offensive Tuesday to repeat denials of American allegations that it is selling anti-tank guided missiles, jamming devices and night-vision goggles to Iraq. It hinted that Washington also had sold sensitive equipment to other nations.

The Kremlin, which usually issues its statements by

fax or through the main Russian news agencies, took the unusual step of calling news organizations and dictating a statement publicizing its version of a conversation Monday between President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The White House said Bush had called Putin to complain about the alleged sales of military equipment, which could pose a danger to American troops.

Instead, Kremlin spokesman Alexei Gromov said Putin was the one who brought up the allegations, denied them and said that Russia respects the U.N. sanctions against Iraq.

Gromov hinted that Putin also mentioned past situations where the U.S. had sold military equipment to other countries. The official who dictated the statement declined to name the instances or the countries involved.

U.S. officials allege that Russian technicians from a private company were in Iraq during the last few weeks to provide technical support for the GPS jammers.

Turkish troops to Iraq?

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul said Tuesday that Turkey plans to send forces up to 12 miles into northern Iraq to deal with any flood of refugees, but will only move if a crisis situation develops.

The statement follows intense U.S. pressure on Turkey not to send its forces unilaterally into northern Iraq, Washington fears that Turkish forces could end up clashing with local Iraqi Kurdish fighters or engaging in friendly fire incidents with U.S. forces.

Gul said that Turkey was determined to act to avoid any flood of refugees. After the 1991 Persian Gulf War, hundreds of thousands of starving, freezing Iraqi Kurds fled Saddam Hussein's forces for the Turkish border, creating a humanitarian disaster for Turkey.

Gul said that Turkey was looking to create a 12-mile zone on the border.

"We want to keep all of the refugees there. This is very clear," he said in an interview in his office. "This is not a populated area and this area ... is for security reasons," Gul said.

Rumsfeld: Military in for big battle

ARLINGTON, Va. — The war in Iraq is on track, but victory, while certain, is still a long way away, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Tuesday.

"Needless to say, we are much closer to the beginning than to the end," Rumsfeld told reporters during a Pentagon briefing Tuesday afternoon. "This campaign could well become more dangerous in the coming days and weeks as coalition forces close in on Baghdad."

U.S. forces are still about 200 miles inside Iraq, according to Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who appeared with Rumsfeld. That figure is virtually unchanged from the previous day's reported progress.

Rumsfeld and Myers spoke as British soldiers were increasingly embroiled in intense urban fighting in Basra, where an uprising reportedly was under way. It was not clear whether the uprising involved local Iraqis fighting against Iraqi military forces, or if the rebellion also included some attacks against the British.

Rumsfeld suggested that problems in Basra have been instigated by the Fedayeen, "fanatical" Saddam Hussein loyalists who the secretary said was "holding guns to the head" of the local populace.

Rumsfeld said that the Iraqis who are now causing problems for British troops in the city of Basra are not, in fact, part of the 51st Division that senior defense officials said had "simply melted away" last Friday, after their senior leader surrendered.

Once Iraqis are convinced that the regime in Iraq is finished, rebellions will spread throughout the country, Rumsfeld predicted.

"The people will rise up, let there be no doubt," Rumsfeld said. "They are repressed people."

Air forces flew more than 1,000 sorties against Iraqi troops on Monday, Myers said, most of which were directed against Republican Guard units ringing Baghdad.

Meanwhile, the port of Umm Qasr "has been secured," and troops are now preparing the facility to receive humanitarian aid, Myers said.

The resistance U.S. troops are encountering now "was expected," Rumsfeld said.

Gen: Iraqi GPS jammers are disabled

CAMP AS SAYLIYAH, Qatar — Six satellite jamming devices, which Iraq was using to try to thwart American precision guided weapons, were destroyed and have had "no effect" on U.S. military operations, a U.S. general said Tuesday.

"We have noticed some attempts by the Iraqis to use a GPS jamming system that they obtained from another nation. We have destroyed all six of those jammers in the last two nights' airstrikes. I'm pleased to say they had no effect on us," U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Victor Renuart said.

Renuart said U.S. forces were "on track" in the drive toward Baghdad despite sandstorms that enveloped troops on the battlefield Tuesday.

"The dark days are probably coming for the dark side, and Saddam's regime has more dark days ahead than we do," he said.

U.S. forces were "maintaining and increasing pressure on all fronts, even in the bad weather," he said.

Renuart warned Iraqi civilians to stay away from military formations and buildings used by Saddam's regime and its leaders.

He also advised them to keep off the roads to limit casualties.

"I continue to remind the people of Iraq that the battlefield extends across the country now," he said. "We have forces in all areas of the country. It's not really safe for Iraqis to drive, to try to flee danger. It's really much safer for them to remain in their houses."

Renuart accused Iraqi forces, especially the Fedayeen militia, of "terrorizing neighborhoods" and using civilians as human shields.

"Human shields are a cowardly way to act on the battlefield," Renuart said. "I'm comfortable that we will not put our troops in the position where we would disregard the safety of any noncombatants."

2 Iraqi Embassy staffers expelled

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines on Monday ordered the expulsion of two high-ranking Iraqi Embassy staffers after a U.S. request for countries to expel Baghdad's diplomats.

Foreign Secretary Blas Ople said he summoned Iraqi Charge d'Affaires Samir Bolus to inform him that First Secretary Abdul Karim Shwaikh and an attaché, Karim Nassir Hamid, had to leave the country within 72 hours.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said the two will be expelled because of "evidence of espionage." She said the Iraqi Embassy in Manila will not be closed and Iraqi diplomats will be dealt with case by case.

"We are only expelling those with some evidence of espionage," she said.

Ople said the two Iraqis were taking photographs of the American Cemetery in Manila on the eve of a memorial service last November.

The U.S. Embassy canceled the event at the last minute, citing a terrorist threat.

2nd al-Qaida suspect pleads guilty

BUFFALO, N.Y. — A second of six Yemeni-American men accused of training at an al-Qaida camp in Afghanistan months before the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks pleaded guilty Monday to charges he supported al-Qaida.

Shafal Mosed, 24, entered the plea to a charge of knowingly and unlawfully providing and attempting to provide material resources to a foreign terrorist organization, namely al-Qaida.

Under a plea deal, he agreed to cooperate with investigators. In exchange, prosecutors dropped one charge and agreed to seek a lighter sentence of eight years. He could have faced 15 years.

Mosed was ordered held until sentencing, scheduled for July 16.

In January, co-defendant Faysal Galab reached a deal with the government in which he agreed to testify against the other five men. Since then, negotiations have been underway involving all of the others, defense and prosecuting attorneys have said.

Mosed, of suburban Lackawanna, a U.S.-born former college student who worked as a telemarketer, acknowledged that he bought a uniform and trained in the use of guns and a grenade launcher at al-Farooq training camp near Kandahar and performed guard duty while there from April to June 2001.

He also admitted hearing al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden speak "about 50 men who were on a suicide mission."

The six men, all American citizens of Yemeni descent, were arrested in September and charged with violating a 1996 law that prohibits giving money, weapons or other support to foreign terrorist organizations.

Prosecutors have said the men were awaiting orders from bin Laden's group to carry out an attack in the United States but have acknowledged there was no evidence they posed an imminent threat.

The alleged leader of the group, Yemeni-American Kamal Derwish, was believed killed in a CIA air strike on Nov. 3 in Yemen, U.S. officials have said.

From staff and wire reports

Illesheim Apaches in fierce Baghdad battle

BY STEVE LIEWER

Stars and Stripes

AT ARMY AVIATION CAMP, Central Iraq — Capt. Andrew Tapscott had never seen anything like the wall of steel that met him as he flew his AH-64D Apache Longbow into the Baghdad suburbs.

"It was like the 'Flight of the Intruder,'" said Tapscott, a pilot from the 6th Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, referring to the 1991 Danny Glover movie. "My aircraft went up there and took a bullet in the belly."

Thirteen Longbows from the 6th Squadron, an Apache unit from Illesheim, Germany, flew into the area south of Baghdad on Sunday night to attack military targets associated with the Iraqi Republican Guard. Along with them were 18 Longbows from the 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment out of Fort Hood, Texas.

It was the first battle for the Longbow, a late-'90s update of the 20-year-old Apache, the Army's only attack helicopter.

Their first battle wasn't as successful as hoped: Although all except one of the aircraft returned home battered but safe, all had bullet holes. One helicopter from the 1-227 Aviation was forced down.

Rough beginning

The squadron met ground fire minutes after leaving this camp in central Iraq after dark.

"We expected to get shot at," said Lt. Col. Mike Barbee, the 6-6 Cavalry's squadron commander and a pilot on the mission. "But we didn't expect to get shot at the entire route."

One of Barbee's aircraft was lost even before it left camp. It took off briefly but fell back to the ground because of its weight and the dusty conditions, said Maj. John Lindsay, operations officer for Task Force 11th Aviation. The landing badly damaged the helicopter, but the pilots weren't injured.

The 6-6 Cavalry and 1-227 Aviation took off after dark to attack two separate targets in the same area south of Baghdad. The Fort Hood aircraft arrived first and actually destroyed several military vehicles before the ground fire got too severe — bringing down one helicopter.

The Pentagon said two pilots had been taken pris-

oner — Chief Warrant Officer Ronald D. Young Jr., 26, of Lithia Springs, Ga., and Chief Warrant Officer David S. Williams, 30, of Orlando, Fla.

Williams and Young were shown on Iraqi television on Monday, apparently uninjured.

Lindsay said it is not clear why the aircraft went down. He said it landed safely in a suburban field about 30 miles south of Baghdad.

The crew's wingman stayed in the area, firing his gun and trying to fend off attackers from the ground. But the wingman had to leave when his aircraft caught fire. Jettisoning his remaining missiles and rockets, the pilot returned safely to base.

Military officials said Tuesday that they had destroyed the helicopter, but did not say how.

Under fire

Both units flew nearly an hour through sporadic gunfire to reach their target areas, which had already been hit by Air Force bombing raids. But the bombing seemed to barely suppress the ground fire, which pilots said seemed to come from everywhere.

"Our wingman started calling that we were taking rounds," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 James Snyder, 32, one of the 1-227 Aviation pilots who flew in the mission. "The sky just lit up. There were tracer rounds all over."

"When we got into the urban areas, the anti-aircraft and small-arms [fire] just started opening up," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Timothy Redmond, 38, the 6-6 Cavalry's safety officer. "It was from the left, from the right, almost crisscross."

Redmond's unit never made it to its targets because of the heavy fire, said Maj. Kevin Christensen, the squadron's operations officer.

"About halfway up the route it was pretty intense," he said. "If we would have kept going, we would have lost a lot of airplanes."

One 6-6 pilot, whose name is not being released pending family notification, was grazed in the neck when a bullet pierced his bubble canopy. Another pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mike Tomblin, at first thought the injured pilot had been killed.

But the pilot managed to apply a pressure dressing himself to the wound, which turned out to be minor, Christensen said.

Upon their return to the camp, the pilot was treated

by medics and evacuated by helicopter to a medical post, where he's recuperating and in good condition.

Tough fight ahead

The helicopters returned fire with their 30 mm guns, but had to return when they expended their ammunition, Lindsay said. Even along the 40-minute trip home they flew through gunfire. Some lost hydraulic or communications systems to bullets and flew home on backup systems.

The efforts of the crews drew praise from Lt. Col. Scott Thompson, commander of the 2nd Squadron, 6th Cavalry Regiment, the 6-6 Cavalry's sister unit in Illesheim. There is good-natured competition between the two units, but it was forgotten after this mission.

"There are a lot of heroes down there in the 1st Battalion [227th Aviation Regiment] and the 6-6 Cav who brought back a lot of busted-up aircraft," he told his pilots during a briefing Monday afternoon.

Col. William Wolf, commander of Task Force 11th Aviation, said it is clear that the Iraqi irregulars are a tougher foe than anyone imagined.

"This isn't the Iraqi army, these are guerrilla forces," Wolf said. "Not that they can't be beaten, but we didn't expect this kind of organization. We did get our licks in, and I'm proud of what they accomplished during a very intense fight."

For most of the pilots, this fight was their first combat.

"The sound of the rounds hitting the aircraft is something I'll never forget," Snyder said. "You can feel it in your feet."

"There's a distance and difference between war and combat," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Lance McElheney, 56, a 1-227 pilot on the mission who has been flying attack helicopters since Vietnam. "I don't have any trouble explaining it to the younger pilots now."

For pilots flying under the banner of Task Force 11th Aviation, Sunday night's mission offered grim evidence that the war against Iraq won't be the cakewalk some expected.

"We were covered by the grace of God to have gotten back safe," Christensen said. "This is a pretty solid indication that we have a long, hard fight ahead of us."

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101st Airborne soldiers fight fear of enemy within

BY SANDRA JONTZ

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — As if U.S. warfighters in Iraq don't face enough stress combating a known enemy in the Iraqi regime, some now might question if the enemy is one of their own, mental experts said.

And that fear of the unknown could be debilitating.

Sgt. Asan Akbar, of the 326th Engineer Battalion of the 101st Airborne, is suspected of throwing grenades into the tent of his leadership on Saturday, killing Army Capt. Christopher Seifert, 27, and injuring 15 others.

Army officials said Akbar, a Muslim, might have acted out of resentment for the U.S.-led strike to topple the Iraqi regime.

Akbar's mother, Quran Bilal, told The Tennessean in Nashville her son had told her he feared persecution because he is a Muslim, and she said he was not allowed to participate in the first Gulf War because of his religion.

"What goes through a good soldier's mind is 'this might not be the only guy,' and that's got to be frightening and adds stress to an already stressful situation," said Scott Swartzwelder, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Duke University in North Carolina. He also works for the Department of Veterans Affairs and counsels patients at the VA hospital in Durham.

Without details of the incident and ongoing investigation, experts spoke in generalities. But theories abound,

from a soldier who snapped under the stress of war to a premeditated terrorist attack, they said.

"This could be a guy with a political or social agenda who decides he's going to take advantage of his connection to American personnel and American weapons to further his agenda," said Swartzwelder, who holds a doctorate in clinical psychology. "But the first thing that comes to mind is the issue of stress."

Depression or being "chronically disgruntled," coupled with placement in a high-stress situation — such as war — "is going to increase the probability that the anger will be unmasked by that stress," he said.

"The guys [in Kuwait] are under constant stress. They don't know when the next Scud missile is coming or when the next ... terrorist is going to come walking through the gate strapped with explosives."

Or if they'll be victims of fratricide.

"Most guys going into combat expect they're going into harm's way," said Dr. Lawson Bernstein, a clinical and forensic neuropsychiatrist, and assistant professor of psychology at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine.

"But to be fragged in TOC in the rear?" he said, using a Vietnam-era phrase that means to be attacked in the tactical operations center by someone in your own unit. "This puts the guys at a higher risk for [post-traumatic stress disorder] because it's such an oddball event. They're at major risk."

The only formal psychiatric evalua-

tion soldiers receive is just before they're discharged, said Army spokesman Maj. Steve Stover.

"There's no [psychiatric evaluation] before going off to combat," he said.

When asked why not, Stover said: "The sheer number of people. We just couldn't do it."

However, Army leaders throughout the ranks receive training to recognize signs and triggers of troubled soldiers, he said.

"And you spend a lot of time with the people to your left and to your right," Stover said. "You're never going to know for sure how they'll react until you're in combat."

The "Screaming Eagles" of the 101st, based in Fort Campbell, Ky., are continuing their mission — the best thing for the unit's morale, the mental health experts said.

And U.S. Central Command has no plans to have warfighters screened for their religious, ethnic or cultural backgrounds before being sent to the combat zone, said Marine Corps Maj. Pete Mitchell, a spokesman at CENTCOM's forward headquarters in Qatar.

That's good news for one military legal expert.

"Casting doubt on an individual's loyalty because of ethnicity or religion would work incalculable damage to the cohesiveness of the military as a whole," said Eugene Fidell, president of the National Institute of Military Justice in Washington. "We are a nation of immigrants, and that would be an appalling development."

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Sergeant charged

The 101st Airborne Division soldier suspected of attacking his own troops in Kuwait arrived Tuesday at the U.S. Army Confinement Facility in Mannheim, Germany.

The Army took Sgt. Asan Akbar of the 326th Engineer Battalion into custody Sunday shortly after an attack on the division's 1st Brigade field headquarters at Camp Pennsylvania.

George Heath, a spokesman for the 101st Airborne at Fort Campbell, Ky., said Tuesday afternoon that charges had been filed against Akbar, but the Criminal Investigation Command has not released specifics.

"But he would not be in Mannheim if he had not been charged," Heath said.

One soldier, Capt. Christopher Scott Seifert, 27, of Easton, Pa., was killed when a grenade exploded inside the tent. The attack also wounded 15 soldiers.

The 9th Military Police Detachment staffs the jail on Coleman Barracks, the U.S. military's major confinement facility in Europe. It was built in 1963 and can house more than 230 inmates. The facility falls under the 21st Theater Support Command.

"It's the only place in the region where we hold soldiers who are in pretrial confinement," said Carolyn Jackson, a U.S. Army Europe spokeswoman.

Normally, soldiers under pretrial confinement can stay in Mannheim up to a year.

Army officials said Akbar may soon be sent back to Fort Campbell, home of the 101st, for military court proceedings.

From staff reports

Families, Fort Bliss worry for POWs

BY CHRIS ROBERTS

The Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas — Joining the 507th Maintenance Company was not supposed to be terribly risky. The Army company is made up mostly of mechanics and isn't considered a combat unit.

So officials at Fort Bliss were horrified to learn that at least 10 members of the 507th were missing in Iraq, five of whom were seen in Iraqi video being interrogated.

Joel Hernandez, 19, instantly recognized his older brother, an Army supply truck driver, as he watched from his home in Mission, Texas. Supply Specialist Edgar Hernandez, 21, was one of those captured.

"His job really is not that dangerous, but once you're out there anything you do is dangerous, I guess," Joel Hernandez said.

News of the captures rippled through Fort Bliss, the massive 1.1 million-acre post that is home to the Army's center for the education and training of air defense artillery soldiers and units.

"The mood of course, is very tragic," spokeswoman Jean Offutt said Sunday.

Offutt confirmed that at least 10 of the missing were with the 507th, which deployed last month with the 11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade. The 507th keeps diesel tanker trucks rolling, fixes generators and maintains mechanical parts.

Iraqi video showed five U.S. soldiers — four men and one woman — being peppered with questions. In response to queries about where they were from, one soldier said he was from New Jersey; the others said they were from Texas.

The New Jersey soldier is Sgt. James Riley, 31, who wanted to serve in the military even when he was a young boy growing up in New Zealand, his family said from their home in Pennsauken, N.J.

Athol Riley, his father, said that when James came home on leave last summer, he painted the family's house,

The killed and captured

Killed

■ Nine Marines, fighting near An Nasiriyah, encountered Iraqi troops pretending to surrender, March 23: Sgt. Michael E. Bitz, 31, Ventura, Calif.; Lance Cpl. David K. Fribley, 26, Lee, Fla.; Cpl. Jose A. Garibay, 21, Orange, Calif.; Cpl. Jorge A. Gonzalez, 20, Los Angeles; Staff Sgt. Phillip A. Jordan, 42, Brazoria, Texas; 2nd Lt. Frederick E. Pokorney Jr., 31, Nye, Nev.; Lance Cpl. Thomas J. Slocum, age unknown, Adams, Colo. Names of others not released.

■ Army Capt. Christopher Scott Seifert, 27, grenade attack at 101st Airborne Division camp in Kuwait, March 23. U.S. soldier suspected in attack, military officials say.

■ Army Reserve Spc. Brandon S. Tobler, 19, non-combat vehicle accident in Iraq, March 22. Hometown not available.

■ Navy Lt. Thomas Mullen Adams, 27, of La Mesa, Calif., collision of two British helicopters, March 22.

■ Helicopter crash in Kuwait, March 21: Marine Capt. Ryan Anthony Beaupre, 30, of Bloomington, Ill.; Marine Cpl. Brian Matthew Kennedy, 25, of Houston; Marine Staff Sgt. Kendall Damon Waters-Bey, 29, of Baltimore; Marine Maj. Jay Thomas Aubin, 36, of Waterville, Maine.

■ Ground combat in Iraq, March 21: Marine 2nd Lt. Therrell S. Childers, 30, of Harrison County, Miss.; Marine Lance Cpl. Jose Gutierrez, 22, of Los Angeles.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Eric J. Orlows-

ki, 26, of Buffalo, N.Y. Machine gun accidentally discharged, date uncertain.

■ Sgt. Nicolas M. Hodson, 22, of Smithville, Mo. Vehicle accident in Iraq, date uncertain.

Captured

■ Pilots of Apache helicopter downed after not returning from mission March 23. Shown in Iraqi state television March 24, apparently uninjured: Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ronald D. Young Jr., 26, from Lithia Springs, Ga.; Chief Warrant Officer 2 David S. Williams, 30, from Orlando, Fla.

■ Shown on Iraqi television after pre-dawn ambush of convoy near An Nasiriyah, southwestern Iraq, March 23: Army Spc. Joseph Hudson, 23, of Almagordo, N.M.; Army Pfc. Patrick Miller, 23, of Park City, Kan.; Army Spc. Shoshana Johnson, 30, of Fort Bliss, Texas; Edgar Hernandez, 21, supply truck driver, of Mission, Texas, rank unknown; Army Sgt. James Riley, 31, of Pennsauken; N.J.

■ In addition, seven others were classified as missing from An Nasiriyah. Among them: Army Pvt. Brandon Sloan, 19, of Bedford Heights, Ohio, Pfc. Lori Piestewa, 22, of Tuba City, Ariz., and Pfc. Jessica Lynch, 19, supply clerk, of Palestine, W.Va., family members said. The names of four others were not available.

Sources: U.S. military and relatives. Hometowns may be those of family.

shown on TV. Her father said he learned of his daughter's capture while searching a Spanish-language network for cartoons to watch with Shoshana's 2-year-old daughter.

"You know, hundreds of thousands

of soldiers are out there. You never think that one of your family members would be one of those to be taken captive," said a cousin, Tracy Thorne.

More than 200 people gathered Monday night for a community prayer service in Valley Center, Kan., to pray for missing 23-year-old Pfc. Patrick Miller, the troops and the people of Iraq.

Miller is married with two young children.

Miller's half brother, Thomas Hershberger, 27, has said he wants the United States to finish the war "as fast as possible" so his brother can come home. As for his mother, "I haven't had a conversation with her without her crying," he said.

In Almagordo, N.M., Natalie Hudson — the wife of POW Spc. Joseph Hudson, 23 — said Monday that Army officials had telephoned to reassure her that all possible steps would be taken to get Hudson home safely.

"They tried to keep it positive," she said. The couple started dating when she was a sophomore at Almagordo High School. They have a 5-year-old daughter.

Four of the 10 missing were identified by relatives as: Pvt. Brandon Sloan, 19, of Bedford Heights, Ohio; Pfc. Lori Piestewa, 22, of Tuba City, Ariz.; and Pfc. Jessica Lynch, 19, of Palestine, W.Va., and Spc. James Kiehl, 22, of Comfort, Texas.

Sloan's mother, Kimberly Sloan of Detroit, said the Army told her early Monday that her son was missing and that nothing more was known about him. "He's a very kind person, and I'm extremely proud of him for fighting for our country," she said Monday night.

Randy Kiehl, 47, said his biggest frustration was lack of information about his only child, a computer repair technician.

"As far as information goes, up and talking to people from the Pentagon, I've gotten the same information or story line: 'We don't have anything else; he's listed as MIA,'" Kiehl said.

"And in this day and age of information technology and satellite technology ... when they tell me MIA, it's kind of hard to handle," said Kiehl, an Army specialist from 1975 to 1978.

Coalition appeals for surrender by Iraqi forces

BY RICHARD PYLE

The Associated Press

U.S.-led coalition forces are moving toward Iraq's "center of gravity" — the ancient, fabled city of Baghdad — with a strategy of appealing to their adversary's reason before unleashing a potentially devastating frontal assault on the capital's defenders.

American commanders remain hopeful of getting the Iraqis to capitulate without an all-out fight for Baghdad. The U.S. military is using a combination of threats and persuasion aimed at the three vaunted Republican Guard divisions defending the city.

The basic message, directed primarily at lower-ranking officers and line troops of the Republican Guards, is: "We need your help to reconstruct this nation. You need to be part of the solution," said military analyst John Abrams, a retired Army four-star general.

The alternative for the Iraqi defenders: Face attack and perhaps destruction by the allies' high-tech weaponry.

The American and British forces' primary concern in the event of a battle for Baghdad is the Republican Guards' Medina, Nebuchadnezzar and Hammurabi divisions.

Other concerns are the possible use of chemical weapons by Saddam if cornered, and the guerrilla tactics of the Fedayeen, the die-hard paramilitary forces that are closest to the Iraqi dictator. They were blamed for deadly hit-and-run ambushes against U.S. troops over the weekend and would be a similar threat to carry out terrorist-type actions inside the city, military analysts said.

A top priority for U.S. and British commanders would be avoiding civilian casualties in the sprawling city of 5 million, and doing it without added risk to their own troops.

"We are talking about a surgical strategy against an enemy that is fortified in an urban environment," said Abrams, who served in combat in Vietnam and the 1991 Persian Gulf War and was an adviser to NATO commanders during the Kosovo war. "We have to do this in a way other than busting in doors. That is when the catastrophic losses begin to grow."

He said the allies' precision-guided weapons and special operations teams are designed to safeguard civilians as much as possible. He said U.S. forces have learned a great deal about warfare in populated areas by studying Russian conduct in Afghanistan and Chechnya and the Israelis' methods in dealing with Palestinians.

After pushing through the city of An Nasiriyah, bypassing Najaf and moving to within 50 miles of Baghdad's southern edge, lead elements of the U.S. forces hunkered down in a desert sandstorm, which was expected to delay further movement for at least a day.

Officials at U.S. Central Command headquarters in Doha, Qatar, were silent on the next move. Some analysts said the next 72 hours would be critical in determining the degree of Iraqi resistance.

While the highly visible main attack force headed north toward Baghdad, the whereabouts of some U.S. forces were unclear. One British analyst in Qatar speculated that the primary objective might not be Baghdad at all, but Saddam's fortified clan headquarters of Tikrit, 90 miles north of the capital.

In a report to Parliament, British Prime Minister

Tony Blair said "the vital goal is to reach Baghdad as swiftly as possible, thus bringing the end of the regime closer."

Iraqi officials reacted to the allied movements with words of defiance. The information ministry hinted at guerrilla warfare if the city is invaded, saying that "many of the popular fighters from the Iraqi people are very well trained in using many types of weapons," and would "dismember this snake."

Appearing on Iraqi television, Saddam himself warned: "We will make it as painful as we can."

Military analysts agreed that any armed showdown outside the city weighed in the allies' favor, because they have total air superiority and an array of high-tech weapons able to hit Republican Guard positions at long range, including Abrams tanks with computerized 120 mm guns, Apache attack helicopters and precision-guided missiles and bombs that can pinpoint targets night or day.

The Republican Guards, reconstituted after the 1991 Persian Gulf War, appear to be outgunned at every turn. Many of their top-line Soviet T-72 tanks were destroyed in that conflict; those left are a decade older, short of spare parts and in any event no match for American armor or the Apaches' Hellfire anti-armor missiles.

"I think that lethality as far as the Republican Guards are concerned will be fairly brutal," said Rear Adm. Retired Stephen Baker, a senior fellow and analyst at Washington's Center for Defense Information.

Abrams said the allied forces, as they move toward Baghdad, must be careful to protect their flanks from the kind of attacks by Fedayeen that inflicted serious casualties on Army and Marine units at An Nasiriyah and Umm Qasr over the weekend.

Public asked to help find suspect

MIAMI — Arab-American community leaders on Monday urged cooperation with the government's search for a Saudi-born man allegedly planning terrorist attacks.

Parvez Ahmed, the Florida chairman of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and other local Arab-American leaders stood with FBI officials to demonstrate their support of the search for Adnan El Shukrijumah, whose last known address is in the Miami area.

"This is our country, this is our state, this is our community," Ahmed said. "We join the FBI in calling on the public to come forward and contact the FBI offices if they have any information."

Hector Pesquera, head of the FBI's South Florida office, said El Shukrijumah "has been identified by senior members of the al-Qaida organization" as a serious threat to the United States' interests here and abroad.

Senior federal law enforcement officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said last week they were exploring possible links between El Shukrijumah and Jose Padilla, a former south Florida arrested last year for allegedly plotting to detonate a radioactive bomb.

The names of Padilla and El Shukrijumah — or perhaps one of his half-dozen aliases — surfaced in intelligence collected after the March 1 capture in Pakistan of senior al-Qaida organizer Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

El Shukrijumah's father, Gulshair Muhammad El Shukrijumah of Miramar, said earlier that his son was a "peaceful guy" and that it was unlikely his son knew Padilla. He said he knew most of his son's friends and had never seen him with Padilla.

Arab-Americans voiced concern Monday that any proceedings against El Shukrijumah be conducted in public. The government wants to try Padilla in secret as an enemy combatant.

"We do not presuppose guilt or innocence on Adnan Shukrijumah," Ahmed said, seeking assurances that rights to due process will be upheld if El Shukrijumah is apprehended.

Pesquera declined to further detail the reasons for the FBI's interest in El Shukrijumah, nor would he speculate on how his case would be handled if he is taken into custody.

Fewer gays discharged

The military discharged fewer gay servicemembers in 2002 than in preceding years, according to a study cited in The New York Times.

The report by the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network said that the military discharged 906 homosexual troops last year, down from 1,273 in 2001, the Times reported Tuesday.

The total was the lowest since 1996, when 870 were discharged, according to the gay rights group that monitors the military. The Times said the total had increased each year between 1996 and last year.

The Times listed the following discharge numbers for 2002:

- 429 from the Army.
- 218 from the Navy.
- 121 from the Air Force.
- 109 from the Marine Corps.
- 29 from the Coast Guard.

Legal defense network officials said the reason for the decline in discharges was unknown, the Times said.

President Clinton adopted the "don't ask, don't tell" policy in 1993. Under that policy, gays can serve in the military as long as their sexual orientation doesn't become known.

GI guilty in fatal wreck

A 12th Aviation Brigade soldier was convicted of two charges of negligent homicide Tuesday after a two-day trial at the Bissell Law Center on Leighton Barracks in Würzburg, Germany.

Spc. Michael Dick, 22, a UH-60 crew chief assigned to Company E, 5th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, was involved in a two-car accident on B-19 near Giebelstadt on Dec. 2, 2001. A passenger in his car, Sgt. Joseph R. Paciencia Jr., 21, and the German driver of the other vehicle, Werner Englert, were both killed.

Dick lost control of his 1978 Corvette while traveling too fast for road and weather conditions, according to evidence given by two eyewitnesses during the case.

A panel consisting of officers and enlisted members sentenced Dick to reduction to the lowest enlisted grade, forfeitures of all pay and allowances and six months confinement in the Mannheim Regional Confinement Facility.

From staff and wire reports

British forces kill 20 Iraqis, seize politician near Basra

The Associated Press

SOUTHERN IRAQ — British forces killed about 20 Iraqi fighters and seized a senior Baath Party politician near Iraq's second-largest city Tuesday, and repelled an Iraqi counterattack in Basra, a British military officer said.

Col. Chris Vernon, speaking in Kuwait, said British forces raided the local headquarters of Saddam Hussein's Baath party in Az Zubayr, about 10 miles southwest of Basra.

Richard Gaisford, a British reporter embedded with British troops, said Iraqi troops were firing mortars at civilian protesters staging an uprising in Basra, and that coalition forces were firing missiles at the pro-Saddam forces.

Gaisford said British troops backed by tanks and armored vehicles were massing on Basra's outskirts and were planning to enter the city. He said there were two large explosions around 1800 GMT that totally destroyed Baath party headquarters.

Officials at the Coalition Press Information Center in Kuwait could not confirm the reports. "We've had reports we can't substantiate as of yet of an uprising in Basra. We are closely monitoring the situation," U.S. Marine Maj. David C. Andersen said.

Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed al-Sahhaf denied any uprising in Basra.

"The situation is stable. Resistance is continuing and we are teaching them more lessons. This announcement [of an uprising] ... stems from a feeling of frustration" on part of the British, al-Sahhaf told Qatar-based satellite station Al Jazeera.

Troops with the British 7th Armored and 3rd Commando brigades have been battling at least 1,000 irregular Iraqi units outside of Basra for two days. The units inside Basra are believed to include members of Saddam's Fedayeen, the Baath party paramilitary organization, as well as elite Republican Guard units.

In Basra, Iraqi irregulars staged a counterattack against British forces, moving southeast toward the

Al Faw peninsula and the 3rd Commando Brigade, Vernon said. British units "brought in close air support and destroyed about 20 armored vehicles, including tanks," he said.

British forces put up loudspeakers at Basra's edge, broadcasting radio messages to Basra residents, encouraging them to oppose forces supporting Saddam.

Vernon said no artillery was being fired in central Basra "even though we are being fired on from the center by their artillery."

He told BBC television earlier that Iraqis were using human shields to defend Basra: "7th Armored Brigade have made reports of gunmen, irregular forces, coming forward with civilians in front of them — we assume being coerced."

"Clearly, we cannot engage the gunmen for risk of causing undue civilian death," he said.

Earlier Tuesday in Qatar, U.S. Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks said militia members were passing themselves off as civilians, including in one attack Monday north of Basra in which Iraqi forces sent in tanks as well as civilian buses and cars to join the battle with Fedayeen forces inside.

The decision Tuesday to declare parts of Basra military targets came after aid agencies warned that a humanitarian crisis loomed in the city of 1.3 million people, with electricity and water supplies cut off and hospitals out of supplies.

"In a few weeks, when the population has exhausted its supplies, we will need to intervene," said Christiane Berthiaume of the World Food Program, which distributed food under the U.N. oil-for-food program. She said government warehouses were near empty.

Poor-quality water could cause cholera or an outbreak of diarrhea, which already is responsible for 75 percent of deaths of children under 5 in Iraq, Ian Simpson of the World Health Organization said.

Power was cut Friday as coalition forces tried to secure Basra.

Other disabled pumping stations were operating again by Monday, restoring the water supply to 40 percent of the city, the Red Cross said.

Ambushes force Marines to reassess Iraqis

BY ELLEN KNICKMEYER

The Associated Press

ON THE ROAD TO BAGHDAD, Iraq — The U.S. Marines, M-16s pointed, forced the Iraqi men out of their vehicle, questioned them, and shoved them down onto the rocky sand — slashing their tires first to ensure they wouldn't tail a convoy again any time soon.

After the hoped-for popular welcome in Iraq turned out to be deadly ambushes by ruse, U.S. forces heightened their vigilance Monday of a people they hoped to win over.

"It's tough to win over their hearts and minds now, when you have to hold them at arm's length," said Lt. Col. Michael Belcher of the 1st Marine Division.

His men dealt with the three Iraqis — suspected ex-Iraqi soldiers, holding suspected Iraqi military goods.

In two cases Sunday near An Nasiriyah, Iraqi forces deceived Americans into believing they were surrendering or welcoming them.

U.S. officials said one Iraqi unit indicated it was giving up but, as the Marines approached, the Iraqis opened fire, killing nine Americans. U.S. military sources said about 40 were wounded.

Another ambush in An Nasiriyah, in which 12 soldiers were listed as missing, may have involved a surrender situation, U.S. officials said.

U.S. forces have been skirting cities and towns as they push toward Baghdad. On Monday, residents of the border town Safwan — one of the few towns directly taken by U.S. forces — stoned the passing military convoy.

With resistance tougher than expected, there have been no joyous scenes of liberated towns as there were in Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf War.

"When you're at war in someone's homeland, it's a different story," said another Marine of the 1st Marine Division, a Gulf War veteran digesting word about the ambush and killings.

"Last time, everyone was happy to see us. We were heroes. We won and we went home," said the Marine, whose car pulled away before he could give his name.

This time the few sightings U.S. forces have of Iraqis in the desolate, little-populated impoverished south are of Iraqi deserters.

The ex-soldiers walk on the scorching sides of the highway in clusters, belongings strewn over their

shoulders, scrounging for food, searching for water to drink in culverts.

Some waved big and smiled wide when U.S. forces passed. But especially since Sunday's ambushes, U.S. forces have looked at them warily and kept their distance, weapons trained.

On Monday, U.S. Marines lay sprawled on the sides of the road by halted convoys, machine guns and rifles trained on parched fields and flocks of sheep.

The three Iraqis stopped by Belcher's unit Monday were pulled over after they had made a long swing by the U.S. convoy, doubled back, and swung by again.

The Marines suspected they were Iraqi deserters and looters with military goods in their apparently stolen car.

They slashed their tires to keep them from continuing on, and put them face down in the dirt. The Iraqis stayed there under the hot sun, sprawled and not daring to raise their heads, for the hour or so until the convoy passed.

Catching a stranger's eye, one man ventured a thumbs up and a grin. It faded, and he pressed his face back down again in the sand in defeat.

Camels crossed the highway path of the U.S. tanks, tow-mounted vehicles, machine gunners and other hardware.

Desperately poor families stood in baked clay courtyards of the rough stone houses watching the invading army go by — but they only stared.

Only the youngest among them waved back and smiled at the strangers.

Not all interactions between U.S. forces and Iraqi people are negative.

Unable to trust the grown-ups, U.S. troops turn to the children as outlets for the goodwill they all say they feel for the Iraqi people. Daily, ragged, barefoot children make their way to the highway route of the invasion to beg for food.

On Monday, one little boy in a grimy Arabic gown brought his even younger brother, wide-eyed and still wobbly on his toddler feet.

The older brother raised his arms in supplication to the troops.

His little brother looked over at him, and copied him, thrusting both arms toward the convoy.

Plastic bottles of water, sorely craved in the desert — bounced down around them, and military ready-to-eat rations pelted the pavement. The boys moved back and forth before the grinding treads of tanks to retrieve the bounty and fold it into a roll of the older boy's gown.

TENNIS

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla. — Venus Williams lost to fellow American Meghann Shaughnessy 7-6 (2), 6-1 in the Nasdaq-100 Open.

The fourth-round upset spoiled a potential quarterfinal showdown between Williams, a three-time champion, and No. 6 Jennifer Capriati. Advancing instead was Shaughnessy, who is seeded 23rd and beat Williams for only the second time in their seven meetings.

BASEBALL

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Randy Johnson and the Arizona Diamondbacks agreed to a \$33 million, two-year contract extension through the 2005 season, when the left-hander turns 42.

Johnson's \$16.5 million average annual salary will be the highest ever for a pitcher, topping the \$15.45 million Roger Clemens averaged with the New York Yankees in 2001 and 2002.

VIERA, Fla. — The Montreal Expos acquired Livan Hernandez from the San Francisco Giants, uniting the former World Series MVP with his half brother, Orlando Hernandez.

Montreal also acquired catcher Edwards Guzman and \$3.2 million in exchange for pitcher Jim Browner and a player to be named. The money will pay all of Livan Hernandez's salary but the \$300,000 minimum.

Livan Hernandez, 28, was 12-16 with a 4.38 ERA last year for the Giants, and he has a 69-69 major league record and 4.42 ERA since defecting from Cuba. He won the World Series MVP award with Florida in 1997.

MINNEAPOLIS — Kirby Puckett's sexual assault trial began, with the Hall of Famer accused of dragging a woman

Sports in brief

into a restaurant men's room and groping her.

Prosecutors contend the former Minnesota Twins star grabbed the woman's breast before she escaped from the bathroom at the Redstone American Grill in suburban Eden Prairie on Sept. 6.

Puckett is charged with false imprisonment, criminal sexual conduct and assault. As proceedings began, he pleaded innocent to the misdemeanor assault charge, which prosecutors added last week.

FOOTBALL

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Vikings made their biggest free agent acquisition of the offseason, signing former Detroit linebacker Chris Claiborne to a two-year deal.

Terms of the deal weren't immediately released.

Claiborne, who's started 58 games in the last four seasons, is expected to bolster a linebacker corps led by veteran middle linebacker Greg Biekert. Claiborne has spent most of the past two seasons at the middle linebacker spot but can play both inside and outside.

In his four NFL seasons, Claiborne has 391 tackles, 10.5 sacks and six interceptions. Last year, he led the Lions with 102 tackles. He also had 4.5 sacks and three interceptions, returning one for a touchdown.

DETROIT — Restricted free-agent linebacker Na'il Diggs has signed an offer sheet to leave the Green Bay Packers and join the Detroit Lions.

Lions spokesman Matt Barnhart said that the Lions signed Diggs to an offer

sheet for a four-year deal Saturday. The Packers have one week to match the offer. If they don't, they will receive the Lions' fourth-round pick in this year's draft.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — A former Sacred Heart basketball player sued the school, saying she was dropped from the team, her scholarship was rescinded and she was ordered to leave campus after telling her coach she was pregnant.

The Women's Law Project filed the lawsuit against the Roman Catholic university on behalf of Tara Brady, who was the team's starting center. The organization is a nonprofit public interest law center in Philadelphia.

Bernard Gilmore, a spokesman for Sacred Heart, said he could not comment because he had no information about the lawsuit.

The suit alleges that the university violated Title IX, which was passed in 1972 and prohibits federally funded educational institutions from engaging in sex discrimination.

DES MOINES, Iowa — A former Iowa State assistant basketball coach pleaded innocent to child pornography charges.

Randall Brown made his plea in U.S. District Court and remains free on his own recognizance. His trial was tentatively set for mid-May.

Brown's lawyer said he most likely will try to have the trial delayed so his client can continue treatment for depression. Brown started treatment before the two charges were filed, after

the deaths several years ago of two of his four daughters, ages 3 and 4, lawyer Timothy McCarthy said.

The 45-year-old coach, flanked by friends and family, did not speak to reporters outside the courthouse.

ATLANTA — Texas sophomore T.J. Ford and Connecticut junior Diana Taurasi won the Naismith Awards as the top college basketball players in the country.

Ford, a 5-foot-10 guard, leads the Longhorns in scoring (15), assists (7.4), and steals (1.96) per game. Last year, he was the first freshman in NCAA history to lead the nation in assists with 8.27 per game. He ranks second on Texas' all-time career assist list with 495.

Taurasi, a 6-foot guard, leads the Huskies with 16.5 points, 4.7 assists and 1.2 blocks per game this season. She is 12th on UConn's all-time scoring list with 1,452 points.

SKIING

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. — Bode Miller settled for silver in the giant slalom in the U.S. Alpine Championships, beaten by his friend and roommate Erik Schlopy.

The result stopped Miller's bid to become the first skier in 44 years with four titles in the nationals.

Schlopy finished in 2 minutes, 24.64 seconds in temperatures in the 40s, which contributed to the deteriorating snow conditions at Whiteface Mountain.

Miller finished 0.31 behind, capping a week in which he won the super giant slalom, slalom and combined. Buddy Werner won four events in the 1959 nationals.

Jesse Marshall finished third, followed by Vonn Thomas and Jake Zamsansky.

From The Associated Press

Travelers may spread SARS

HONG KONG — Adding to fears that a mystery flu-like illness is being spread by air travelers, Hong Kong officials said Tuesday nine tourists apparently came down with the deadly disease after a mainland Chinese man infected them on a flight to Beijing.

Health officials in Hong Kong and Singapore are taking new precautions to try to stop the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS. But Hong Kong reported 26 new cases Tuesday and its health officials said they were unable to order quarantines.

Singapore has ordered some 740 people who may have been exposed to the illness to stay home for 10 days or risk prosecution.

A World Health Organization team was in mainland China trying to figure out if the atypical pneumonia that has killed 17 people and sickened 426 globally is linked to an earlier outbreak in Guangdong province that killed five people.

The Geneva-based organization said Tuesday it would like greater cooperation from authorities in Beijing.

U.S. health officials, meanwhile, said SARS may be caused by a new strain of a common cold virus.

It appears to spread from close contact, primarily through nasal fluids by coughing or sneezing, and many people in Hong Kong, where 10 people have died and 286 are sick, have started wearing surgical masks.

The nine Hong Kong tourists who contracted SARS apparently got it from a man on Air China's flight CA112 from Hong Kong on March 15, officials said Tuesday.

The Beijing man, who is now hospitalized, apparently caught it while visiting a sick relative in Hong Kong, said Dr. Leung Pak-yin, deputy director of health.

Hong Kong officials had said for days that SARS did not threaten the community at large, but the territory's health chief, Dr. Yeoh Eng-kiong, came out with broader warnings on Monday, urging people with flu-like symptoms to stay home.

Singapore, which reported four new cases Tuesday for a total of 69, has not had any deaths but ordered its mass quarantine as a precaution.

Vietnam on Monday reported two new deaths — a doctor and a nurse — for a total of four deaths, and Canada has had three deaths.

Missing 14-year-old returns home safely

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A 14-year-old Michigan girl missing since March 1 was recovered safely Monday and her companion, a convicted murderer, was arrested without incident, the California Highway Patrol said.

A CHP trooper stopped a suspicious looking vehicle near Standish, Calif., 70 miles northwest of Reno, Nev., said CHP Commissioner D.O. "Spike" Helmick.

Lindsey Diane Ryan was riding in the truck with Terry Drake, 56, police said. Drake had met the Ryan family in church and he and the girl later corresponded by e-mail.

Drake had been considered to be heavily armed, including with weapons stolen from Ryan's home.

An officer spotted Drake's truck in a parking lot. The white pickup had been "roughly and rudely painted black," Helmick said, but the license plate number matched up. Drake was arrested without incident.

The girl "appears to be in good condition," Helmick said.

Calls to the Ryan family home in Jones, Mich. — more than 2,000 miles from where the girl was found — were met with a busy signal.

Ryan left her home near Jones, a small town near the Indiana state line, early on March 1 to meet Drake a short distance away, police had said. The two left the area together.

From wire reports

Faces 'n' places

Red Cross benefit

More than two hours on stage wasn't enough for **Tim McGraw**. The country superstar played a concert Friday night in **Auburn Hills, Mich.**, then teamed up with **Kid Rock** for a two-hour charity gig in nearby **Pontiac, Mich.**

About 400 people showed up for the impromptu show, announced on local radio while McGraw was on his concert stage.

Fans paid \$20 each for admission, snapped up \$10 T-shirts and forked over money to have McGraw sing their requests. All the money — \$9,000 to \$10,000 — went to the Red Cross.

Among the requests were McGraw's "Sing Me Home," "Tickin' Away," "Illegal" and "Watch the Wind Blow."

Kid Rock joined in for **Bob Seger's** "The Fire Down Below," then brought three members of his **Twisted Brown Trucker Band** on stage for a set that included a medley of the **Allman Brothers Band's** "Midnight Rider," his own "Cowboy" and **Waylon Jennings'** "Good Ol' Boys."

DeMent pulls plug on show

Folk singer **Iris DeMent** stunned 600 people at Barrymore Theater in **Madison, Wis.**, by taking to the stage and announcing she could not perform while war raged.

"It would be trivializing the fact that my tax dollars are causing great suffering and sending a message to the world that might is right," DeMent told the crowd Friday night.

DeMent said she had struggled over her decision for hours in her dressing room. Opening act **Greg Trooper** had already performed when she told the audience she could not sing.

Some audience members stood and applauded, but a few grumbled in the lobby afterward as they waited for refunds.

"I think it's the most courageous thing. I don't want my money back. Absolutely not," said **Patty Allen**, 51, who has seen DeMent at least three times in Madison and has traveled to **New Orleans** for a show.

"I think it's kind of a cop-out, really," said **George Robertson**, 43, who drove 80 miles from **Milwaukee** to see DeMent.

"Her songs deal with a lot of personal things. If she can sing about all that stuff that has happened in her life, she can sing tonight."

Lithgow takes a little detour

A little thing like a blizzard couldn't keep actor **John Lithgow** from raising money for the **Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation**.

He simply had to take a slight detour — through **Texas** — to get from his home in **Los Angeles** to **Vail, Colo.**

Last week's snowstorm shut down the **Denver** airport so he had to plot an alternate route, flying through **Dallas** and eventually landing at **Eagle, Colo.**, about 30 miles west of Vail. He arrived in plenty of time to play host to the foundation's "Hope in Motion" weekend.

"Chris asked me personally to come and I couldn't say yes fast enough. I found out early on that Denver was going to be a hopeless case so I got rerouted to the Eagle airport," Lithgow said Saturday in a telephone interview from Vail.

"Chris has turned tragedy into a story of triumph. I hadn't talked to him for a couple of years when he called. The difference is amazing. His voice is getting so much stronger," he said.

This was the fifth year for "Hope in Motion," which has raised more than \$1 million to support research on spinal cord injury paralysis.

From The Associated Press

Knicks 100, Raptors 90

NEW YORK — Howard Eisley hit two three-pointers as part of an 8-0 third-quarter run that put New York in control for good in a 100-90 victory over Toronto on Monday.

Keeping their slim playoff hopes alive, the Knicks went ahead by as many as 16 points in the fourth quarter to send Toronto to its ninth loss in 10 games.

Kurt Thomas scored 23 and Allan Houston added 20 for the Knicks, while Eisley and Latrell Sprewell scored 13 each.

Antonio Davis scored 23 and Vince Carter had 21 for the Raptors, although Carter was held to just five points in the second half.

Grizzlies 110, Magic 104

ORLANDO, Fla. — Pau Gasol scored 26 points, and Jason Williams added 17 points and 15 assists as Memphis handed Orlando its first loss in five games.

Tracy McGrady had 34 points for the Magic, but hit only one of 10 shots in the second half when the Magic offense sputtered.

Gordan Giricek and Pat Garrity had 19 points each for Orlando.

Lorenzen Wright had 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Grizzlies, who won at Orlando for the first time in franchise history. Memphis had been 0-6 at Orlando.

SuperSonics 82, Suns 73

PHOENIX — Rashard Lewis scored 25 of his 29 points in the second half as Seattle beat Phoenix, an ugly home loss that could prove costly in the Suns'

NBA

fight for the final Western Conference playoff spot.

Ray Allen added 22 points for the Sonics, who have won three of their past four. Reggie Evans grabbed 13 rebounds as Seattle dominated the boards 50-36.

Stephon Marbury had 22 points and 10 assists as the Suns matched their season-low in scoring. They also scored 73 in their season-opener at Seattle. Shawn Marion added 15 points on 5-for-16 shooting.

The loss by Phoenix clinched a playoff spot for the San Antonio Spurs. The victory left Seattle just 2½ games behind the Suns with 11 to play. Phoenix entered the game tied with Houston for the eighth and final playoff spot in the West.

Jazz 96, Celtics 91

SALT LAKE CITY — Matt Harpring scored 25 points, and Karl Malone had 19 points and 12 rebounds as Utah beat Boston to extend its winning streak to four games.

John Stockton, who turns 41 on Wednesday, added 17 points and eight assists for the Jazz, who are No. 6 in the Western Conference playoff standings with 12 games left in the season.

Utah shot 50 percent in the second half (16-for-32) and held the Celtics to one field goal in the final two minutes.

Paul Pierce led the Celtics with 24 points and eight rebounds.

Antoine Walker added 20 points for Boston, which has lost five straight for the first time under coach Jim O'Brien.

Mavericks 108, Nuggets 96

DENVER — Dirk Nowitzki had 25 points and Nick Van Exel added 24 against his former team as Dallas completed their second straight season-series sweep of the Denver.

Nowitzki overcame a 6-for-23 shooting night by hitting 12 of 12 free throws.

In increasing its lead to 3½ games over idle San Antonio in the Midwest Division, Dallas beat Denver for the eighth straight time.

Juwan Howard had 25 points and Nene Hilario 23 points for Denver. Rodney White added 17 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his first career triple-double.

Rockets 108, Clippers 90

LOS ANGELES — James Posey scored 19 of his 23 points in the first half as Houston beat the Los Angeles Clippers for their seventh victory in 10 games.

The victory, coupled with Phoenix's loss to Seattle, gave the Rockets a one-game lead over the Suns for the eighth and final Western Conference playoff berth with 12 games remaining.

Houston shot 55.4 percent from the field and had their highest-scoring first half this season, building a 63-39 lead on the long-range shooting of Posey and Glen Rice and a buzzer-beating 17-footer by Eddie Griffin.

Houston never led by fewer than 15 points in the second half.

Lamar Odom had a season-high 30 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for the Clippers.

From The Associated Press

Scores/standings**NBA****EASTERN CONFERENCE****Atlantic Division**

	W	L	Pct	GB
New Jersey	42	28	.600	—
Philadelphia	41	28	.594	½
Boston	38	33	.535	4½
Orlando	37	34	.521	5½
Washington	32	37	.464	9½
New York	32	39	.451	10½
Miami	22	48	.314	20

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	44	25	.638	—
Indiana	41	29	.586	3½
New Orleans	40	31	.563	5
Milwaukee	34	36	.486	10½
Atlanta	29	42	.408	16
Chicago	25	46	.352	20
Toronto	21	48	.304	23
Cleveland	13	56	.188	31

WESTERN CONFERENCE**Midwest Division**

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Dallas	53	17	.757	—
x-San Antonio	49	20	.710	3½
Minnesota	45	26	.634	8½
Utah	41	29	.586	12
Houston	37	33	.529	16
Memphis	26	44	.371	27
Denver	15	56	.211	38½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Sacramento	50	21	.704	—
Portland	44	25	.638	5
L.A. Lakers	39	30	.565	10
Phoenix	36	34	.514	13½
Golden State	34	36	.486	15½
Seattle	33	36	.478	16
L.A. Clippers	22	48	.314	27½

Monday's games

Memphis 110, Orlando 104
New York 100, Toronto 90
Utah 96, Boston 91
Dallas 108, Denver 96
Seattle 82, Phoenix 73
Houston 108, L.A. Clippers 90

NHL**EASTERN CONFERENCE****Atlantic Division**

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-New Jersey	44	20	6	5	99	200	156
x-Philadelphia	40	20	11	4	95	185	159
N.Y. Islanders	33	30	10	2	78	205	207
N.Y. Rangers	31	33	9	3	74	196	214
Pittsburgh	25	41	6	5	61	179	238

Northwest Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
y-Ottawa	48	20	7	1	104	245	172
x-Toronto	40	27	6	3	89	218	194
Boston	35	29	8	4	82	229	221
Montreal	28	32	8	8	72	191	217
Buffalo	23	35	9	8	63	170	200

Southeast Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Tampa Bay	35	23	13	5	88	209	194
Washington	35	28	8	5	83	205	203
Florida	23	32	12	9	67	167	222
Atlanta	26	38	6	5	63	201	269
Carolina	22	37	10	6	60	162	216

WESTERN CONFERENCE**Central Division**

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Detroit	44	19	9	3	100	243	187
x-St. Louis	39	21	9	6	93	235	197
Nashville	27	30	12	6	72	178	190
Chicago	27	32	11	5	70	182	199
Columbus	26	39	7	3	62	194	241

Northwest Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Vancouver	43	20	12	1	99	247	194
x-Colorado	37	18	12	8	94	225	180
x-Minnesota	39	25	10	1	89	186	161
Edmonton	34	25	8	9	85	210	211
Calgary	26	34	12	4	68	172	214

Pacific Division

	W	L	T	OT	Pts	GF	GA
y-Dallas	41	17	15	3	100	229	160
x-Anaheim	38	26	9	5	90	194	185
Phoenix	30	32	9	4	73	188	204
Los Angeles	30	34	6	5	71	188	202
San Jose	27	35	6	8	68	199	224

Two points for a win, one point for a tie and overtime loss.
x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

Monday's games

Boston 3, Toronto 2
Buffalo 4, Colorado 3, OT
Philadelphia 6, Atlanta 2
New Jersey 4, Florida 1
Calgary 2, Phoenix 0
Tampa Bay 4, San Jose 1
Anaheim 5, Columbus 0

From The Associated Press

Bruins 3, Maple Leafs 2

BOSTON — Mike Knuble scored the tiebreaking goal 15 seconds into the third period Monday to lead the Bruins to a 3-2 victory over Toronto in Mike O'Connell's home debut as Boston coach.

Steve Shields stopped 24 shots, including a glove save on Alexander Mogilny's wrist shot in the final 45.9 seconds to preserve the victory.

Rob Zamuner and Martin Lapointe also scored for Boston.

Darcy Tucker and Tomas Kaberle scored for Toronto and Ed Belfour stopped 30 shots as the Maple Leafs lost in regulation for the first time in eight games.

Toronto twice took one-goal leads before the Bruins tied it.

Flyers 6, Thrashers 2

PHILADELPHIA — Michal Handzus had two goals as Philadelphia scored three times within 1:36 of the third period to beat Atlanta.

Tony Amonte added a goal and an assist, while Keith Primeau and Donald Brashear each had two assists as the Flyers stopped Atlanta's four-game road unbeaten streak (2-0-2).

Amonte has five goals in seven games since being acquired from Phoenix on March 10.

Ilya Kovalchuk and Marc Savard scored for the Thrashers.

Robert Esche, starting his fourth consecutive game in place of injured goalie Roman Cechmanek, made 16 saves.

Sabres 4, Avalanche 3 (OT)

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Jochen Hecht scored his second goal of the game with 44.8 seconds remaining in overtime as Buffalo rallied to beat Colorado.

Peter Forsberg scored twice, once on the power play, while Milan Hejduk scored his 43rd goal for Colorado. Fors-

NHL

berg, who had never scored a goal in four previous games at HSBC Arena, has seven points in the past two games, and 18 goals and 66 points in the past 41 games.

Daniel Briere tied it at 3-3 when he scored a power-play goal with 7:19 remaining in regulation. Maxim Afinogenov also scored for Buffalo.

Colorado backup David Aebischer, playing in his 22nd game, stopped 31 shots. Buffalo's Martin Biron made 33 saves.

Devils 4, Panthers 1

SUNRISE, Fla. — Brian Gionta's second-period goal held up as the game-winner in New Jersey's victory over Florida.

Jiri Bicek, Jay Pandolfo and Joe Nieuwendyk also scored for the Devils, who won their fourth straight game.

Marcus Nilson scored a power-play goal for Florida, which set a franchise record with its seventh consecutive home loss. The Panthers haven't won at home in 13 games (0-10-2-1).

Martin Brodeur made 19 saves and extended his unbeaten streak at Florida to 12 games (11-0-1). Brodeur is 19-1-3 in his past 22 decisions against the Panthers.

Mighty Ducks 5, Blue Jackets 0

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Jean-Sebastien Giguere made 29 saves, and Rob Niedermayer scored two goals as Anaheim beat Columbus.

Giguere earned his eighth shutout this season, moving him into a tie for the league lead. The Ducks broke open a one-goal game by scoring three times after Anaheim learned it clinched its first postseason berth since 1999.

Playing for first-year coach Mike Bab-

cock, the Ducks have already set a franchise record for victories and points. Their previous best was 85 points and 36 victories set during the 1996-97 season.

Lightning 4, Sharks 1

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Vincent Lecavalier and Dave Andreychuk each had a goal and an assist as Tampa Bay beat San Jose clinched a playoff berth.

Nikolai Khabibulin made 34 saves as the Lightning extended their unbeaten streak to a franchise-record nine games (6-0-3).

Khabibulin hasn't lost since Feb. 11 (11-0-2).

Andre Roy and Ruslan Fedotenko also scored for Tampa Bay, which earned just the second playoff trip in the club's 11-year history while extending its Southeast Division lead over Washington to five points with six games to play.

With a power-play goal late in the second period, Lecavalier passed Brian Bradley to become Tampa Bay's franchise goal-scoring leader (112).

Patrick Marleau scored his career-best 26th goal for the Sharks.

Flames 2, Coyotes 0

CALGARY, Alberta — Stephane Yelle and Martin Gelinas scored, and Roman Turek made 16 saves as Calgary knocked Phoenix out of the Western Conference playoff picture.

Turek recorded his fourth shutout of the season and 24th of his career. He didn't face a shot until he smothered Paul Mara's soft wrister 3:15 into the second period.

The Coyotes were outshot 15-0 in the first period. It was the second time in franchise history that Calgary didn't allow a shot in a period and the second time in franchise history that Phoenix couldn't register one.

Calgary beat the Coyotes on home ice for the first time in 11 tries (1-7-2-1) dating to Oct. 30, 1997.

From The Associated Press